

TOWN OF ABINGDON
BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 12, 2014 - 6:00 P.M.

The regular meeting of the Town of Abingdon Board of Zoning Appeals was held Tuesday, August 12, 2014, at 6:00 p.m. The meeting was held in the Municipal Building, Colonel Arthur Campbell room.

Mr. Andy Stockner, Vice-Chairman, called the meeting to order, Mr. Sean Taylor called the roll.

Roll Call:

Members Present: Mr. Andy Stockner, Vice-Chairman
 Mr. Scott Wilson
 Mr. Mathew T. Bundy

Comprising a quorum of the Board

Members Absent: Mr. Paul Quetsch, Chairman
 Dr. H. Ramsey White

Administrative Staff: Mr. Sean Taylor, Assistant Town Planner
 Mrs. Deborah Icenhour, Town Attorney
 Mr. John Dew, Director of Public Services and Construction
 Mr. C. J. McGlothlin, Code Enforcement Officer (Absent)
 Mrs. Jenny Carlisle, Administrative Assistant; Planning and Public Works

Visitors: Ms. Marcy Miller, William King Museum of Art

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(2) Approval of Minutes: Regular meeting, May 13, 2014

Mr. Bundy made a motion to approve the minutes from the regular meeting, May 13, 2014, as presented. Second by Mr. Wilson. Motion carried.

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(3) Case No. 400 - **William King Museum of Art, owner**; Marcy Miller, representative; 415 Academy Drive NW, Abingdon, VA 24210; application for a variance from the requirements of Article 21, Section § 21-14, Sign Ordinance, to allow animated message boards in the B-3 Central Business District. Premises affected by this request are **located at Academy Drive and West Main Street. Tax Map No. 10-1-33.**

The date of the application is April 3, 2014. This item was tabled during the Tuesday, May 13, 2014 meeting to allow time for the Academy Drive widening project to get underway. Mr. Taylor provided an overview of the application, stating that the applicant is seeking a variance that would allow the William King Museum of Art to place an electronic message board/sign on Town property, at the corner of West Main Street and Academy Drive, located in the B-3 Central Business District. Section § 21-14-1G of the Town of Abingdon

sign ordinance does not allow such signs in the B-3 zone. When the Planning Commission recommended this sign ordinance to Town Council for adoption their basis was that, in dense areas, electronic message boards are distracting to building traffic and pedestrians. Electronic message boards are allowed in the B-2 General Business and M-1 Limited Industrial Districts where traffic does not compete as much with pedestrians and tightly located buildings. Previously, two banks in this district had LED signs. Both of them have approached the Town in recent past with interest in erecting larger message boards. They have been denied on that basis, but have been allowed to keep that which already exists. Approval of this variance would set a precedent and attract more applicants requesting the same.

At this time, Ms. Marcy Miller, Director, William King Museum of Art, presented the board with a drawing of the sign they are proposing. The sign shape is that of their logo, with museum name on top. The electronic part of the proposed sign would show what is currently exhibited in their galleries. She stated that unlike the marquee at the Barter Theater, people are not able to see what is currently showing just by passing by. She stated that they feel the museum qualifies for the variance under requirements of exceptional size and topographical characteristics, because the museum property is 20 acres large and is very far from Main Street. They do not plan to have anything animated; they just want electronic lettering of an elegant and informative manner.

Mr. Taylor asked if they have thought about doing a marquee instead. He mentioned that larger square footage is allowed with a marquee. Ms. Miller replied that a marquee would be labor intensive for their staff as they would have to take a truck and ladder down to change the lettering. She continued that the electronic message board is their preference but they will go that route if this is not approved.

Mr. Wilson pointed out that the proposed sign would be located on Town property and would be setting a precedent. He stated that future applicants would say that the Town even gave the museum a place to put the sign. Then he mentioned that they also have another sign on Russell Road with as much traffic as Main Street, and the museum has more visibility throughout the town than other businesses.

Mrs. Icenhour stated that she does agree that William King has special circumstances, but not a hardship.

Mr. Stockner suggested having a unique sculpture or other unique idea instead of a message board. He cited as marketing people have found out, signs are not as effective as people think. He further commented that Russell road has 12 thousand cars pass by daily and Main Street has 15 thousand cars pass by daily. This should be viewed as an advantage to the museum. He also stated that directions to the museum on the website are not very good.

After further discussion, Mr. Wilson made a motion to deny application for a variance from the requirements of Article 21, Section § 21-14, Sign Ordinance, to allow animated message boards in the B-3 Central Business District. Second by Mr. Bundy. All in favor to deny.

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There being no further business Mr. Bundy made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting of the Town of Abingdon Board of Zoning Appeals, Tuesday, August 12. Second by Mr. Wilson. Motion Carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

Mr. Andy Stockner, Vice-Chairman

Sean Taylor, Secretary, pro tem